



Youth Empowerment as A Tool for Socio-Economic Changes in Nigeria

(A Case Study of Katsina Youth Craft Village)

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Received 20 April 2020, Revised 13 August 2020, Accepted 1 December 2020, Published 1 May 2021

Abstracts

The level of national development in any given country is largely dependent on the extent to which the enormous potentials of its youth are harnessed and utilized by the government to promote and sustain economic growth and social progress. In Nigeria, widespread unemployment has constrained the efforts of the youth to contribute meaningfully to national development. Using descriptive analysis drawn, majorly from secondary data, the paper established that widespread unemployment and poverty in Nigeria has not only induced youth disempowerment, but also created conditions that predispose the youth to deviant behaviours which hinder economic growth, political stability, harmonious social cohesion, and overall national development. It is recommended that if Nigeria is to join the league of the 20 strongest economies in the world by the year 2020, the potentials of the Nigerian youth as the locomotive of national development must be properly harnessed and utilized by eliminating the obstacles that hinder people from transforming their physical, biological and socio-economic environment for their individual fulfilment and for the benefit of society at large¹.

Key Words; Employment, Katsina Youth Craft Village, Socio-Economic .

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1.0 Research design and methodology

This paperwork designed to tackles issue concerning youth empowerment as the tool for creating socio-economic change, particularly within Katsina state territory and Nigeria at large.

In conducting this study, data and materials shall be collected from journals concerning Nigerian Economy. The research sources will include materials from youth economy as well as publication and magazines, seminars, conferences, especially International Institute of Inspiration Economy Conferences. There is also a peep into the internet, especially websites that contain materials on youth development and socio-economic change. There will also be a look at my interview with Katsina Craft Village management that contains decisions relating to the study².

2.0 Results of the research

The result of this research shows the instrumentality of youth empowerment to nation-building in Nigeria. This paper determined the impact of training and financial support provided by Katsina Youth Craft Village in facilitating entrepreneurship development. The effort accelerates the socio-economic change as well as provides social security development nationwide especially if the Federal Government of Nigeria and High Network Individuals can enhance and develop the model. Katsina Youth Craft Village ran the state Youth

Employment and Vocational Skills Development Program, Small Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Program, Agriculture Sector Employment Program and Special Public Works Program.

Similarly, it was reported that unemployment is a risk faced by labour market entrants throughout most of the present-day world. Our surveys show that rates of youth unemployment varied between the Arab Mediterranean countries, then differed by gender and educational attainments. However, the overall unemployment rates were not particularly high by the current global and European standard³.

3.0 Literature Review

In view of the above, there is no literature review concerning Katsina Youth Craft Village; therefore, this research will be counted as the first research on this subject matter.

3.1 Introduction

Nation-building is associated with national integration, national consciousness, national unity, construction and modification of socio-economic and political structures so as to move with the times (Gotep, 2000). It is concerned with the overall development of a nation economically, politically and socially. This view is corroborated by Mezieobi (1994) who submits that nation-building is a multi-faceted, complex process of building the socio-economic and political dynamics of a political society in such a way as to facilitate the polity's continued independent sustenance, development and growth. In the process, there is a concerted effort by the political leaders to integrate citizens who are naturally diverse in terms of culture, religion, language, economy, education and politics so as to form a united and stable society.

As a vibrant group, the educated and empowered youths can easily be mobilized positively. They can form formidable pressure groups to press home desirable changes in the political leadership in any tier of government. They can use their energy, determination and enlightened position to disseminate information to others so as to create political awareness and consciousness against evil and selfish political machinations. If youths are empowered, one can predict with some degree of certainty, a more transformed Nigerian nation, most probably devoid of corruption, nepotism, political manipulation, which has for long characterized Nigeria's political landscape. Youth employment in agriculture not only ensures food sufficiency but also reduces the unemployment rate, idleness and poverty. Sidi (2004) observes that unemployment compounds the problems the youths are facing in Nigeria. By being idle, they are prone to such vices as prostitution, armed robbery, and rape. Nigerian girls in rural areas could be mobilized and taught to keep poultry farms so as to have more meat for the home. Educated girls develop self-confidence in themselves, are more capable of accommodating others, can take decisions of their own and make choices according to their own independent judgments. This would be a great political investment of a high value for Nigeria⁴.

3.2 Youth Empowerment and socio-economic change in Nigeria

Nigerian youths constitute the most active segment of the entire population of over 140 million people (2006 census figure). They are the social engineers and a veritable channel or catalyst for positive changes in the rural community, in school or in urban setting. Their energy, vigour, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of any society. The focus of this paper was to show the instrumentality of youth

empowerment to socio-economic change in Nigeria. These youths need love and a fair share of the national wealth. They are people with high hopes, great expectations from parents and elders in society. Unfortunately, Nigerian youths had been exported to the most trying time imaginable. Millions of them have been left wallowing in poverty as they roam the streets of major cities in search of non-existent jobs and opportunities. Several graduates of tertiary institutions have been forced into crimes and criminality, and those of them who are not very physically daring have taken to frauds and all sorts of shady pre-occupation. The young women in this frustrated class have taken to disguised prostitution or full-blown harlotry.

At this point, permit me to share with you the effort of Katsina Youth Craft Village on youth empowerment and its impact to the socio-economic change in Nigeria.

3.3 Katsina Youth Craft Village as the tool for Acceleration of Socio-economic Change in Nigeria

Katsina Youth Craft Village established in 2009. The center was tasked with the responsibility of developing creativity and innovation, to create more jobs and reduce unemployment. More than 2000 students are recruited and equipped with different training skills every year. They are trained in the area of computer and G.S.M. phone repairs, carpentry and woodworking, tie and dye, pottery, wrought iron, welding and fabrication, furniture making, auto repair, blacksmithing, photography and film production, catering services and tailoring. Katsina Government is spending a considerable amount of money to support the participants of the program and encourage them to become self-reliant.

The project was designed to provide employment opportunities for over 2000 youth in the state annually through various skills acquisition programs; it is the well-done effort of Katsina State government to address youth restiveness and provide them with jobs for self-reliance and to create socio-economic changes for the security of the people in Katsina State.

The students are admitted to the school through local government community development committees; both sexes have equal opportunities to choose and learn one out of the fourteen 14 modern crafts techniques as sustenance of livelihood and self-reliance. The program duration is run between 3, 6 and 12-month duration depending on the department. Feeding and accommodation are provided by the state government in addition to N2, 000 monthly stipends to cater for the basic needs of the student, and upon graduation, the state government provides resettlement packages to 10 best students from each department as takeoff materials and other small capital enable them to stand on their own.

I would also like to mention the Federal government effort towards youth empowerment before I outline my recommendations;

3.4 Some Programs of Federal Government of Nigeria on Youth Empowerment

Over the years, the Federal Government of Nigeria has put in place some youth program. Some of them will be described here: The National Youth Service Corps Scheme (NYSC), The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Poverty Alleviation Program (NAPEP).

In 1973, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria came out with the brilliant idea of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme created by Decree 24 of May, 1973. The aims of the Scheme, according to Fadeye (1978), are:

- I. To inculcate discipline in our youths by instilling in them a tradition of industry at work and of patriotic and loyal service to the nation in any situation they may find themselves.
- II. To raise the moral tone of our youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievement, social and cultural improvement.
- III. To develop in the attitude of our youth of mind acquired through shared experiences and suitable training which will make them more amenable to mobilization in the national interest;
- IV. To develop common ties among our youths and to promote national unity by ensuring that:
 - a) As far as possible, youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their state of origin.
 - b) Each group assigned to work together is a representative of the country as possible.
 - c) The youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different parts of the country with a view to removing prejudices, eliminating ignorance and confirming at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups.
 - d) To encourage members of the Corps to seek at the end of their corps service, career employment all over the country, thus promoting free movement of labour.
 - e) To induce employers, partly through their experience with corps members, to employ more readily, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of their state of origin.
 - f) To enable our youths to acquire the spirit of self-reliance.

In 1986, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the **National Directorate of Employment (NDE)**. This Scheme was aimed at concentrating effort on the reactivation of public works, promotion of direct labour, promotion of self-employment, organization of artisans into cooperatives, and encouragement of a culture of maintenance and repairs. The youth programs under NDE are:

- a) **National Youths Employment and Vocational Skills Development Program:** which emanated from the realization that the majority of the unemployed are youths without productive and marketable skills. The aim is to provide unemployed youths with the basic skills. Under this program, there is the National

Open Apprenticeship Scheme aimed at providing unemployed youths with basic skills that are needed in the economy. This is achieved by attaching them as apprentices to companies, ministries, parastatals and professional craftsmen and women. Under this program, the various artisans in our cities and villages are being organized into cooperative societies to facilitate the provision of financial and other assistance from the government and the organized private sector. There is an expanding array of skills being learned. Some examples are: auto-mechanics, electrical/electronic maintenance, welding/foundry/metal fabrication, plumbing works, carpentry/joinery, leatherworks, photography, interior design, architectural draughtsmanship, painting, Computer operation, catering/bakery/confectionery, hairdressing, auxiliary nursing, typing and shorthand, tailoring/fashion designing and modeling.

- b) **Small Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Program:** is designed to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians to set up and run their own businesses. In order to help the participants translate their business ideas into viable commercial ventures, the NDE conducts courses in entrepreneurship prior to making loans available to them through its Job Creation Loan Guaranteed Scheme. An applicant is required to submit to the NDE a comprehensive feasibility report of the intended business, the amount of loan needed, names and addresses of two guarantors and his or her own curriculum vitae. The applicants' feasibility studies are submitted to banks for their scrutiny and approval. Small scale industry ventures in operation include candle making, soap and detergent making, foundry works/metal fabrication, used products recycling, restaurants, fashion designing/tailoring, refuse collection, agricultural production, agricultural processing, printing and publishing, textile and garment making, polythene bag, manufacturing, furniture/cabinet works, timber marketing, auto- engineering services, refrigeration and air-conditioning services, block and concrete making and butchering and cold store.

In 2001 Federal Government came up with the **National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP)** consisting of Youth Empowerment Scheme, National Resources Development Conservation Scheme (NRDCS), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS); and Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS). The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has devised many Schemes aimed at combating poverty in the nation's littoral region. What NDDC does, according to Adegbamigbe (2008), is to partner with computer training Centers to assist in teaching youths information technology skills. Examples in Bayelsa are Blessed Initiative, Sagbama Local Government Area; SGS Technical Limited, Sunway Telecoms and Niger Delta Wetland. The NDDC pays N15, 000 on each student for the period of training after which the Commission gives them starter packs.

4.0 Recommendation and Conclusion

The research considers the following recommendations apposite:

- 1) Mentoring and leadership empowerment remain the most powerful tools to positively impact the next generation of leaders. The younger generation needs to be guided, inspired, encouraged and taught to imbibe the essential ingredients of success which include hard work, the right attitude, moral values, determination, perseverance, passion and can-do spirit among several others (Akioye, 2015).
- 2) Non-government organizations (NGOs) have a crucial role to play in poverty alleviation. One of the areas requiring urgent attention is the mobilization and sensitization of the youth and communities to perform their expected roles. These include enhancement of the social-economic awareness of the youth through formal and informal local organizations, leadership and citizenship training in the communities, promotion of the spirit of self- help and self-reliance among the youths.
- 3) Entrepreneurship education has a central role to play as far as empowering our youths for national development is concerned. This has become necessary in all our manpower development efforts in Nigeria principally because few new employments are being created by government departments and private organizations for the employable graduates from our secondary and tertiary educational institutions.
- 4) More Nigerian youths should be trained as craftsmen, technicians to make for self-reliance. Anya (2005) laments that the lack of technical and vocational orientation and content in Nigerian education had limited the achievement of the growth potential of the economy ultimately. The outcome constrained the opportunities for employment leading to the high unemployment rate seen among products at all levels of the educational system but, much more, so among university graduates.
- 5) Excessive reliance on the public sector for the provision of socio-economic resources and the creation of jobs has been the bane of development efforts in Nigeria. It has now been fully realized that the public sector alone cannot provide these facilities because of the limited resources at its disposal. The government must realize its limitations and create an enabling environment for the private sector participation in this regard.
- 6) Parents should bear in mind that if they do not invest in their children who are around them, such children will not have peace. Parents should also try as much as possible to lead their children aright. No child grows right under baneful influences at home since no straight wood can come out of the crooked timber
- 7) Youth Craft centres should be established in any local government in the country for entrepreneurial training which would enable the youths to establish their own businesses.
- 8) The government should provide atmosphere and diversify itself of all projects which the private sector can handle; this will provide enabling environment for private

sector participation investors such as tax holidays, subsidies, guarantees and most importantly improved infrastructure.⁵

5.0 Conclusion

Lack of commensurate opportunities is clearly a major factor in youth alienation and violence. Indeed, the issue of unemployment poses a major problem for youths and requires both public sector and private sector participation to address it if we are to curtail youth marginalization. It should be noted that there appears to be a close link among poverty, poor dietary habits and crimes in any human society. Poverty could be a result of a lack of creative ideas, initiatives, and an income so low that it limits opportunities for self-actualization. There is no doubt that an enlightened and effectively mobilized youth is a critical factor for good governance, economic stability, as well as growth and development. The slogan for the Federal Government of Nigeria should be **“build the youths, build the nation”**. Our youths are precious resources of the country because they symbolize the hope for quality adult society. It is the way the youths are mobilized for national development that will determine the growth of any nation. The government should inculcate in the youths a sense of discipline towards making them socially responsible and accountable, capturing the spirit, essence, purpose of a new national youth agenda.

6.0 Implications and limitations of the study

The research limited on the following headings:

1. Youth Empowerment and Socio-economic change in Nigeria
2. Katsina Youth Craft Village as the tool for Acceleration of Socio-economic Change in Nigeria
3. Some of the Federal Government of Nigerian Program on Youth Empowerment
4. Recommendation and Conclusion.

However, boundary limitation of the research was Katsina state which is located at North-West of Nigeria, it was formed from the northern half of Kaduna State in 1987, Katsina is bordered by the republic of Niger to the north and by Nigerian State of Jigawa and Kano to the east, Kaduna to the South and Zamfara to the West.

The state consists largely of scrub vegetation with some wooded savanna in the south. Its mainly inhabited by Muslim Hausa called Katsinawa and Fulani people and by a few maguzawa (animistic Hausa). Farming is the chief occupation; groundnuts, maize, millet, and rice are the main cash crop, Millet and sorghum are grown as staple foods and their

vegetable gardening in riverine floodplain. Most of the peoples own cattle, sheep, or goats, and hides and skins are sold for profit. Katsina town is the state capital and largest settlement; it has a steel-rolling mill (now Dana) and polytechnic along with many institutions out of 3 Universities and one Federal College of Education. The state is served by the main highway between Kano and Maradi (Niger).Area 9,341 square miles (24,192 square km) and population of 5,792,578 according to the 2006 population census⁶.

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